

# ☆☆☆☆☆ Gurazeni



STORY BY YUJI MORITAKA  
ART BY ADACHI KEIJI





MY JOB  
IS A  
NIGHT  
DUTY.





AS I AM  
SHOWERED  
BY COCKTAIL-  
COLORED  
LIGHTS  
EVERY  
NIGHT



MY WORKPLACE



I AM A RELIEF PITCHER.

THE EIGHTH SEASON SINCE I WAS DRAFTED  
AS A HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE.

I HAVE SOME VALUE AS A SOUTHPAW WITH THE  
SIDE-ARM DELIVERY LIKE THIS.



IT'S TOO  
LATE TO  
WARM YOUR  
SHOULDER  
IN THIS INNING.  
YOU'LL BE  
IN NEXT.

I ONLY  
THREW  
TEN  
PITCHES  
SO FAR.

HUH?  
COACH  
SAKOTA

GOOD,  
STOP  
NOW.

NATSU-  
NOBUKI



I WARM MY  
SHOULDER  
AT HIS  
INSTRUCTION.

THIS IS  
MR. SAKOTA  
(AGE 30)  
THE BULLPEN  
COACH.

YAY  
YAY





BUT THIS IS WHERE I SPEND MOST OF MY TIME BY LARGE IS...THE BULLPEN.

SURE, I OFTEN GO OUT TO THE MOUND.

THIS IS MY WORK PLACE.



SURE SURE DONLITS, MAN.

WHICH COMEDIAN IS GETTING POPULAR THESE DAYS?

WHILE I'M NOT PITCHING, I'D KILL TIME WITH A SMALL TALK.



MR. SAKATA CHECKS OUT THE SITUATION AND DECIDES WHO WARMES HIS SHOULDER.

MURASHITA, YOU GET READY FIRST.

YES SIR.



OR I READ THE ALMANAC OF PLAYERS.



SURELY, I WATCH THE GROUND, TOO...





FOR EXAMPLE, I'D LOOK UP HITTERS I MIGHT FACE TODAY...

WHICH SELLS TO PRO BASEBALL FANS.



THIS IS A BOOK ENLISTING THE PROFILES OF ALL PRO PLAYERS FROM THE TWELVE TEAMS.



SO I ALREADY CHECKED ALL LEFT-HANDED HITTERS ON THE ROSTER...

I AM 'USED AS A ONE-POINT LEFTY' MOST OF TIME.



FROM THIS PROFILE, WHERE DO YOU THINK I AM MOST INTERESTED?

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I CHECK OUT THE CAREER STATS AND LAST YEAR'S FIGURES, BUT...



NAME OF: MITSUHITO TAKEKAWA  
 BORN IN: NAGASAKI, AGE 27, OSAKA  
 BATS: LEFT, THROWS: LEFT, 5' 11",  
 175 LBS, BLOOD TYPE: B,  
 NIPPON HIGH SCHOOLING  
 (KAYO AREA ONLY) - DEBUTED IN  
 APRIL, SALARY: 9,000,000 YEN  
 LAST YEAR: STARTED AND COMPLETED  
 37TH OSAKA GAMES AND 307  
 THIRTIETH OSAKA GAMES (PRO)  
 CAREER STATS AND 37TH SH 2001  
 OSAKA YEARS



ESPECIALLY, THE PLAYER WHO WAS CALLED UP FROM THE MINOR AS A 'LEFTY PINCH HITTER.'

TAKE-KAWA, HUH

野球  
 12球団  
 CLAY

長 178 童  
 陽 亞 大  
 B 給 900  
 本 3 点  
 867 7

THE FIRST LOOK GOES TO THE ANNUAL SALARY!



MAKITA TEMPTERS.

22.6 ML







HOW CAN  
I PUT THIS...  
TO BE HONEST,  
IT'S ALL  
THAT MATTERS.

PRO  
TALKS  
WITH  
MONEY.

YOU LOOK UP  
TO PLAYERS WHO  
GET PAID MORE,  
AND LOOK DOWN  
UPON PLAYERS  
WHO GET PAID  
LESS THAN YOU.



TO BE  
BLUNT,  
THAT'S  
WHAT  
'PRO'  
MEANS...







WE ANNOUNCE  
THE SPIDERS  
CHANGE THE  
PITCHER!

KISHIDA OUT,  
BONDA IN!



PRECIOUS  
"1 GAME  
PLAYED"

NATSUMOSUKE  
BONDA, HEADING  
TO THE MOUND  
AGAIN TODAY.

FOR A RELIEF  
PITCHER, THE  
NUMBER OF  
GAMES PLAYED  
IS ACCOUNTED  
INTO THE PAY.



MY ANNUAL  
SALARIES IS  
EIGHTEEN  
MIL...

A RELIEF PITCHER  
INTO HIS 8TH SEASON  
AFTER GRADUATING  
FROM HIGH SCHOOL.  
HE IS NEVER CALLED  
"AN ELITE PITCHER."



BUT I NEVER  
MADE IT SO FAR.  
THE REALITY  
WAS TOO HARSH.

SEVEN OR EIGHT  
YEARS IN THE PRO,  
AND MY PAY WOULD  
BE IN THE LEAGUE  
OF SEVEN OR EIGHT  
ML...

I USED TO  
BELIEVE SO.





IF YOU'RE INJURED, THEY'D SAY, 'OK, THANKS, BYE.'

BUT THE PRO IS A SCARY AND TOUGH WORLD.

I THINK YOU'RE TALENTED.

DO YOU HEAR ME, BONDA-KUN?

WHEN I CAME TO THE PRO, MR. YASUDA THE SCOUT SAID.



YOU'D BETTER NOT SPEND A PENNY OF YOUR SIGNING BONUS UNTIL YOU RETIRE.

I MEAN NO LL.



THE SIGNING BONUS IN A PRO BASEBALL HAS THE NATURE OF 'SEVERANCE PAY' FOR A REGULAR JOB...



BUT I GOT DRAFTED AT THE BOTTOM, SO MY SIGNING BONUS WAS A MERE FIFTEEN MIL. USD 15,000.

AS MR. YASUDA SAID, I PUT ALL MY SIGNING BONUS INTO A BANK ACCOUNT, AND HAVE NEVER TOUCHED IT SINCE.





IT'S A LINE OF BUSINESS WHOSE DAYS ARE NUMBERED ONCE YOU TURN THIRTY.

A PRO BASEBALL PLAYER HAS TO EARN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE WHILE ACTIVE.

PLUS, ONLY A SELECT FEW BECOME COACHES OR COMMENTATORS AFTER THEY RETIRE.

I KNOW A BUNCH OF PEOPLE WHOSE INCOME DROPPED TO ABOUT ONE MIL--THE YEAR AFTER THEIR RETIREMENT.

UNLESS I MAKE MORE MONEY, IT'S A NEGATIVE IN TERMS OF LIFETIME ACCOUNT.

SO MAKING EIGHTEEN MIL AT AGE 26, WIDELY KNOWN AS THE PRIME TIME OF BASEBALL PLAYERS, IS ABSOLUTELY HOPELESS.



MONEY IS  
BURIED IN  
THE GROUND.

IT'S A WIDELY  
USED PHRASE.



THIS IS  
UNCHANGING  
TRUTH.

IN MY HEAD,  
THE PHRASE  
REPEATS ITSELF  
OVER AND OVER,  
MILLIONS OF TIMES.

I CALL IT "GURA ZENI"  
IN MY HEAD.

(WHICH I NEVER DARE  
SPEAK OUT OF MY MOUTH.)

\*TL NOTE: GURA ZENI MEANS GURA (GROUND) PLUS ZENI (MONEY)



IN OTHER WORDS,  
I HAVE TO USE  
MY WIT TO  
HANDLE THIS  
SITUATION,  
TILTED AGAINST  
ME AS IN 'LEFTY  
VS. RIGHTY.'

...WELL, IT  
HAPPENS  
VERY OFTEN,  
THOUGH.

THE OFFENSE  
IS ALLOWED  
TO CHANGE  
A PITCHER  
HITTER TWICE...

THIS HITTER,  
DOJ WAS...

BUT A  
PITCHER  
HAS TO  
FACE AT  
LEAST ONE  
HITTER  
BEFORE  
HE GETS  
REPLACED.

CLEARLY...

HIS  
ANNUAL  
PAY IS...

IN HIS 4TH  
PRO SEASON  
SINCE HE  
GOT PICKED  
UP FROM THE  
INDEPENDENT  
LEAGUE  
AT AGE 26.

**SEVEN  
MIL!**

\*NOTE: USD 80,000



IF A RIGHTY-  
PINCH HITTER  
WORTH 7 ML  
DOESN'T HIT  
AGAINST A  
LEFTY LIKE  
ME...



AND THE  
7 ML IN.

THE  
9 ML.  
WAS  
TAKEN  
OUT.

THIS DO  
WAS ALSO  
CALLED UP  
TODAY...



CERTAINLY...



PLAY!



IMMEDIATELY,  
--HE'LL BE  
SENT BACK  
TO THE  
MINOR!













ISN'T IT FAIR?  
BECAUSE  
IT MIGHT BE  
MY FATE  
ANY DAY!

BUT I MUST  
GET YOU OUT  
AT MY FULL  
STRENGTH.



YOU NEVER KNOW,  
BUT HE MIGHT END  
UP MAKING LESS THAN  
ONE MILLION YEN NEXT  
YEAR IF HIS JOB SEARCH  
GOES NOWHERE.  
WITH TWO SONS...J



I ALSO HAVE TO  
RAISE MY PAY  
AS MUCH AS  
POSSIBLE!







DAMN

CATCHEE  
EEEEER!!







I BET  
DOJ WOULD'NT  
LIKE TO RETURN  
TO THE BENCH  
WITH SOMETHING  
LIKE THIS...

DAMN!

ISNT IT  
OKAY...

TO GIVE UP ON  
SUCH A FOUL  
FLY THAT IS  
HARD TO CATCH?

I COULD  
GET  
INJURED...





GURA  
ZENI

A large, jagged speech bubble containing the text "GURA ZENI".











THE OPPOSING  
TEAM THOUGHT...

... IN A LEFTY VS.  
RIGHTY WHERE  
THE HITTER HAD  
AN UPPER HAND,

BOI  
FAILED  
TO MAKE  
A HIT  
OFF A  
EIGHTEEN  
MIL. PITCHER.



SUCH A HITTER  
CAN'T POSSIBLY  
HIT AGAINST  
ELITE PITCHERS  
WORTH 100  
OR 200 MIL  
WHEN FACING  
THEM.

THAT'S  
WHAT  
THEY  
DECIDED.



SOME-  
TIMES,  
I FEEL  
LIKE  
FLYING  
AWAY.

THIS  
WORLD  
IS SO  
CRUEL.

BUT  
I CAN'T  
RUN  
AWAY.

BECAUSE ALL  
I HAVE LEFT  
IS BASEBALL...

